

[Prime Minister Martin provided a French translation.]

President Bush. Listen, thank you all.

Come on up, Laura.

Mrs. Martin. How do you do?

Prime Minister Martin. Good to see you.

Mrs. Bush. Prime Minister, welcome. I'm so glad you're here.

Q. Will the next trip be down at the ranch, Mr. President, for the Prime Minister?

President Bush. This is a nice place, but the ranch is even nicer. [Laughter]

Q. You need to teach him to ride. [Laughter]

Prime Minister Martin. I'll invite him to the farm.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:53 a.m. in the Rose Garden at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; Lakhdar Brahimi, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General; and Sheila Martin, wife of Prime Minister Martin.

Remarks on Signing the Executive Order on American Indian and Alaska Native Education

April 30, 2004

The President. Thanks for coming. Glad you all are here. Please be seated. Thank you for coming. Welcome. I'm so pleased to have so many distinguished leaders in this historic place. I see a lot of friendly faces here. I want you to know it's a privilege to stand with you as we take an important step toward a shared objective, improving the education of all American Indian and Alaska Native children. That's what we're here to discuss today. It's an important goal.

Two people are going to be important in this, in reaching this goal—we'll reach it, by the way. My attitude is, when America sets a goal and puts our mind to it, we'll meet the goal. And two people that are going to be very important in reaching this goal will be the Secretary of the Interior, Gale Norton, and the Secretary of Education, Rod Paige, both of whom have joined me here today. Thank you for coming.

I'm also pleased that we're joined by some mighty distinguished Members of the United

States Congress, two from the Senate and three from the House, starting with the President pro tem of the Senate, Senator Ted Stevens from Alaska—thank you for coming, Senator—a member of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee, Senator Craig Thomas from Wyoming—welcome—members of the House Resources Committee—three members are with us today, Ken Calvert of California, Richard Pombo of California, and Dennis Rehberg of the great State of Montana. We're glad you're here. I want to thank you for taking time. These guys are busy people, but obviously, they're committed to this important goal.

I appreciate the tribal leaders who are here. I see leaders from all over the country. I really appreciate you coming to—you honor us with your presence. And you honor us with your strong commitment to making sure that every child learns. It's a really important part of our mutual responsibility, isn't it? When you're a leader, you've got to set important goals and follow through on those goals. And I know you share the same goal I've got: Every child, not just a few, not just some, but every child gets the best possible education. That's what we're here to discuss today.

I want to thank the students who are with me on stage. They've set one standard, and that's the standard of excellence. And they're achieving that. They're scholars, high school scholars, soon to be university and college scholars, who are in town to participate in a science bowl. I told them we need more scientists in the country, and they picked a good area to become an expert, because there's a lot of demand for scientists here in this country that is changing because of technology.

I want to thank the teachers who are here. I appreciate you being a teacher. You know, Senator, you might not remember, but I was the Governor of Texas once. Well, of course, you remember, what the heck am I thinking. [Laughter] But my predecessor was Sam Houston. He was a Senator, a Congressman; he was the President of the Republic of Texas. It's a pretty big deal when you're the President of the Republic of Texas. He was the Governor of Texas. They asked him the most important thing he ever did in his life.

He said, "Teacher." He didn't hesitate. He said, "Being a teacher." So for those of you who are teachers here, thank you for being compassionate citizens who care deeply about the students of our country.

We place a high value on education because we understand the importance of education to our future and the importance of education to tribal nations. It's really important we get it right. In the words of the late Sam Ahkeah, the former chairman of the Navajo Nation Council, "We must encourage our young people to go into education. We need thousands of young lawyers and doctors and dentists and accountants and nurses and secretaries," is what he said. You can't be one of those unless you're educated, if I could paraphrase what this great leader said. His vision was clear. And that's what we're here to talk about today, to make sure all our visions are clear, starting at the Federal level.

His commitment to education has been shared by American Indians and Alaska Natives through the generations. Today his granddaughter, Sharon, is with us. Where are you, Sharon? Sharon, thanks for coming. There's nothing better than being a relative of a famous person. *[Laughter]* Sharon is a leader here in Washington, DC, following in her granddad's footsteps. So thanks for being here. Welcome.

To improve education for children of every background, I was honored to sign what has been called the No Child Left Behind Act. This law challenges what I call the soft bigotry of low expectations. In other words, sometimes people walk into a classroom and see a child and say, "Well, gosh, that child can't learn." That's the lowest of low expectations. This law basically says we've got a different mindset in America. We believe every child can learn and expect every child to learn. That means we've raised standards for every child, not just a few.

You know what happens when you have low expectations and low standards? People just get simply shuffled through the system. And you know who gets shuffled through, the so-called "hard to educate," the isolated, the inner-city child. That's not good enough for America, and this law changes that attitude. We've spent more money at the Fed-

eral level. But now, for the first time, we're asking the question, "Can you show results?" If you expect every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract, if you believe every child can learn to read and write and add and subtract, it makes sense for people to show us whether or not every child is meeting those goals.

The No Child Left Behind Act challenges the soft bigotry of low expectations because it helps raise the bar, and it helps identify problems early, before they're too late. A terrible problem we have at times is that a child can't learn to read early, doesn't learn to read early, and just gets moved through the system. And then they come out of their schools, and they can't read at all. And we've got to stop it now, before it's too late. And the No Child Left Behind Act does that.

The No Child Left Behind Act is meant for every student, not just a few. It's going to improve the lives of our American Indian children and Alaska Native children. It is an important part of making sure we have a hopeful future.

It's also very important that we have people who work hard to make sure the No Child Left Behind Act works. One way to do so is for there to be teacher training. You see, if we expect children to learn to read and write, we've got to use curriculum that work, and therefore, we need people who know how to teach the curriculum that works.

An accountability system, by the way—I recognize sometimes people fear it, but my attitude is, how do you know whether or not you're succeeding unless you measure? Or how do you know whether the curriculum you're using works unless you measure? It's not worth guessing anymore as to whether or not something that you've got in place is working. We need to know, see. And one of the things—we're learning how best to teach, and we need people to teach the teachers how to teach.

And Marilyn Nichols is with us today. Where are you, Marilyn? Oh, there you are. Thanks for coming. Marilyn is a—she leads an intertribal teacher training program in the Haskell Indian Nations University in Lawrence, Kansas. She's really making a profound difference in a lot of people's lives by using her skills to train teachers on how to

teach. In other words, the effort has got to be more than just measuring; the effort has got to be a unified effort to help teachers follow their hearts and to help make sure that every student has got a qualified teacher in their classroom. I really want to thank you for what you're doing. I appreciate your soul. I appreciate your hard work. I also appreciate your clear vision.

And today I'm going to sign an Executive order that will build on the No Child Left Behind Act. First, I want to thank the tribal leaders who have been involved with the writing of this order. Secondly, an Executive order is, when it's signed by the President, means something. At least it does when this President signs it. *[Laughter]* My order establishes a Federal working group, cochaired by Secretaries Norton and Paige, with this specific mission: to help American Indian and Alaska Native children meet the standards set by the No Child Left Behind Act.

This is an important mission. It's an important mission that will call together elements of our Government to put forth a strategy. This Commission will consult closely with tribal leaders. See, we believe people closest to the problem are those that can help designate the solutions to the problems. It will meet with members of my National Advisory Council on Indian Education, who were sworn in by Secretary Paige this morning. And thank you all for coming.

The Executive order calls on Secretary Paige to develop recommendations to improve the teaching of reading. I'll never forget when I was the Governor of Texas, and a woman—I was speaking in Houston—a woman walked up and said, "Reading is the new civil right." It's a powerful statement, when you think about it, isn't it? "Reading is the new civil right." If we're interested in civil rights and human condition and human improvement, our kids have got to learn to read. And there needs to be a focused strategy to make sure that that happens—that that happens.

We've got to strengthen early childhood education. What that means is, the best place to start is early in a child's education. The truth of the matter is, the first teacher a child has is a mom or a dad. And we want our parents to understand how important it is to

read to their children. But we also want the education system to focus early in a child's education. We want them reading. We want to dash the false expectations that certain children can't learn to read.

We want to improve preparation for college and the workforce. We want there to be high high school graduation rates. In other words, we're going to raise the standards. That's what this Commission is going to do. It's going to work with the leadership to say, "How can we work together to raise the standards and expect the best?"

Under this order, Secretaries Norton and Paige will organize a national conference to discuss ways to meet our goal. In other words, there's not going to be just a group of people huddled in Washington. We're going to call in citizens and get input. We want what they call community buy-in. We want people understanding the mission. We also want to make sure we achieve high academic achievement while maintaining the strong and vibrant tradition of cultural learning. Learning to read and honoring a culture go hand in hand; they're not mutually exclusive. And that's an important part—*[applause]*.

I told you I'm an optimistic person. I believe when America sets a goal and puts our mind to it, we can achieve those goals. I also know that every parent of every heritage shares the great dream of a better life for their children. It's a common dream we all have, and it's an important dream to recognize as real in all communities. We will continue the Federal Government's longstanding commitment to the sovereignty of American Indians and Alaska Natives. And we will continue our government-to-government cooperation as we work to meet this very vital goal.

So thank you for coming. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share some thoughts with you. And thank you for witnessing the signing of this Executive order. For those who are part of the authorship, I appreciate your input. I appreciate your willingness to make your views known.

And now I'm going to sign this Executive order. And if the Members of the Congress would like to come up and serve as witnesses, I'd be honored.

[At this point, the President signed the Executive order.]

The President. Thank you all for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:45 p.m. in Room 450 of the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building.

Executive Order 13336—American Indian and Alaska Native Education

April 30, 2004

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, and to recognize the unique educational and culturally related academic needs of American Indian and Alaska Native students consistent with the unique political and legal relationship of the Federal Government with tribal governments, it is hereby ordered as follows:

Section 1. Purpose. The United States has a unique legal relationship with Indian tribes and a special relationship with Alaska Native entities as provided in the Constitution of the United States, treaties, and Federal statutes. This Administration is committed to continuing to work with these Federally recognized tribal governments on a government-to-government basis, and supports tribal sovereignty and self-determination. It is the purpose of this order to assist American Indian and Alaska Native students in meeting the challenging student academic standards of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107–110) in a manner that is consistent with tribal traditions, languages, and cultures. This order builds on the innovations, reforms, and high standards of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, including: stronger accountability for results; greater flexibility in the use of Federal funds; more choices for parents; and an emphasis on research-based instruction that works.

Sec. 2. Interagency Working Group. There is established an Interagency Working Group on American Indian and Alaska Native Education (Working Group) to oversee the implementation of this order.

(a) The Working Group's members shall consist exclusively of the heads of the execu-

tive branch departments, agencies, or offices listed below:

- (i) the Department of Education;
- (ii) the Department of the Interior;
- (iii) the Department of Health and Human Services;
- (iv) the Department of Agriculture;
- (v) the Department of Justice;
- (vi) the Department of Labor; and
- (vii) such other executive branch departments, agencies, or offices as the Co-Chairs of the Working Group may designate.

A member of the Working Group may designate, to perform the Working Group functions of the member, an employee of the member's department, agency, or office who is either an officer of the United States appointed by the President, or a full-time employee serving in a position with pay equal to or greater than the minimum rate payable for GS–15 of the General Schedule. The Working Group shall be led by the Secretaries of Education and the Interior, or their designees under this section, who shall serve as Co-Chairs.

(b) The function of the Working Group is to oversee the implementation of this order. The Working Group shall, within 90 days of the date of this order, develop a Federal interagency plan that recommends initiatives, strategies, and ideas for future interagency actions that promote the purpose, as stated in section 1, of this order. In carrying out its activities under this order, the Working Group may consult with representatives of American Indian and Alaska Native tribes and organizations, in conformity with Executive Order 13175 of November 6, 2000, and with the National Advisory Council on Indian Education (NACIE). Any such consultations shall be for the purpose of obtaining information and advice concerning American Indian and Alaska Native education and shall be conducted in a manner that seeks individual advice and does not involve collective judgment or consensus advice or deliberation.

Sec. 3. Study and Report. The Secretary of Education, in coordination with the Working Group, shall conduct a multi-year study